Great English Army Is Trained in Six Months

"Kitchener and Us," Says an Old Quartermaster Sergeant, "Are Whipping Three Million of the Best Fighting Men Into Shape"—Veterans Who Are Doing the Training—Men Who Have Fought in Other Wars as Drillmasters for Recruits—Aldershot an Immense Military Camp. Subaltern and Officer—The Gigantic Task of Preparing England's Fresh Troops for the Summer Campaign—The Truth About Kitchener's Army—The Views of Military Experts on the Training of a Great Force of Fighters.

Special Correspondence.

LONDON, England, March 20, 1915.

"WHAT sort of an army have we got? Three millions of the best fighting troops the world has ever seen, trained, equipped, and fairly aching to be off to the firing line. That's the sort of an army we've got. That's Kitchener's army today!"

"Daddy" Old, quartermaster sergeant of the —th Battalion, Royal Field Artillery, shrunken and wizened veteran of every famous British campaign since 1870, was speaking.

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"And who is it did the work? Aye, who? It was Kitchener and——" he paused and pointed an informing finger to the circle of veterans gathered about him in the billiard room of the sergeants' mess hall—"us." For emphasis and because it gave him satisfaction, he repeated the phrase, "Aye," he said, "it was Kitchener and us!"

"Look at us. We're the men who have carried through the thing Lord Kitchener planned. We're the only ones could have done it. There isn't a trick in the whole grand game of war that we haven't learned. The officer doesn't live that can teach us a blooming thing about soldiering. We've fought through every scrap that's been since we were big enough to pull a trigger. Khartum, Mafeking, Egypt, the Sudan, and on down to Peking, when we helped to beat the Boxers; we were there, one or another of us, through every mix-up. We learned our trade in the trenches and now we've come to teach it to the kids. And when we've taught them all there is to teach, we're going out and serve the guns again."

The old sergeant queried the group of veterans. "Am I right? have we trained three million kids? Who's to blame for this army that can take the field tomorrow if it's called?"

"Kitchener and us!" came the answer.

"The officers!" snorted the veteran. "What are they good for? Boys out of school without a hair to their faces lots of them. Good lads, mind you, none better; but they don't know the A B C of soldiering yet, so they have come to us to find out! Then they order like we tell them. We're the men that keep them from mistakes. We're the hands and the brain and the backbone of the fighting forces of England. We're the answer to the how of Kitchener's army."

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He was not boasting. It is the truth that Kitchener's army has been recruited and clothed and drilled and fed and finally finished by the non-commissioned officers that marched with England's fighting men when Roberts and French and Smith-Dorrien still had their fame before them.

England owes its fighting name in large measure to its incomparable body of veteran sergeants. The war office where Kitchener rules today has never lost sight of that fact. Neither has Kitchener.

It is not mere chance that has placed at the disposal of England's great military organizer this body of sturdy drillmasters. The leaders of the British regular army for decades back have foreseen the day when Britain, with a standing army of less than a quarter of a million, would be in dire need of just such a nucleus of men as have come to the salvation of the country through the past six months. Hence the development of the perfect non-commissioned officer has formed no small part of Britain's modern military policy. No effort has been spared to make him alert, self-reliant, judicious, thoroughly efficient and to produce him in as great numbers as possible.

The N. C. O., as he is called, has for years been the administrative factor in the army. He has been weighted with responsibilities heaped with obligations and vested with authority. Under this system involving enforced activity of a highly intelligent order, he has been made to learn his lesson well, and year after year has been mustered from the king's forces, carrying the lesson out with him into civil life, there to await the call of a crisis such as the present war has brought him back to face.

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Though England had no great fighting body to throw against her enemy across the North sea, when she flung down the gauntlet last August, she had what was very nearly as good, potential fighting strength. Thanks to the far-sightedness of her military organizers in times gone by, the musty record books on the shelves of her war office held the names, numbering thousands, of the retired non-commissioned officers of famous armies long since passed into memory.

These were the men to whom Kitchener turned for help when his appeal for recruits went abroad through the land. They came, many of them even before his message reached them, and into their hands he placed the training and keeping of 3,000,000 raw recruits. He put his whole dependence on them, for the seasoned officers who might have done their work were needed, and badly needed, with the first line fighters at the front, and the newly drafted officers were as badly in want of instruction as the rawest enlisted men. The N. C. O.s were the men of the hour. Without fuss, methodically, swiftly, surely, after the manner of their training, they shouldered the task of justifying their leader's dependence.

How have they done this stupendous piece of work? By knowing how. By enthusiasm of the highest. By the passionate help their three million pupils have given them. By ceaseless effort, endless good humor, matchless patriotism. Into a week they have crowded a month's instruction; into a month, six months, into six months three years. And still they labor, pumping spirit into their men, rounding off rough edges, rushing recruits to the yawning gaps in the ranks of the evergrowing battalions, regiments and brigades. And always behind them lies the willingness of the men they teach.

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"These aren't the ordinary recruits that we dealt with in the days of peace," said one man who wore the chevrons and the red cross of the Royal Army Medical Corps. "They are not the malingerers who used to join the army because they could find no other way to keep their stomachs full. Our boys today have come to camp because they have a great duty to perform. They need no forcing. Why, man, they sit up of cold nights in their bare huts out there on the downs and study their drill regulations by lantern and candle light when they're so dog tired they can scarcely keep their eyes on the type.

"And what is more they dig down into their own pockets and take from their small allowances the money to buy their drill books with. Soldiering is no irksome business with them as it used to be with the 'Tommies' of the old regular army. Soldiering is just a means to an end and they want to master the technique of it on the run and make an end of the whole thing next summer."

At Aldershot are stationed 260,000 of Kitchener's army. Aldershot in peace times is a military town with a huge garrison quartered in rows of two-story red brick barracks that stretch for miles along the road to London. Here today are quartered the men of the new volunteers command, filling the places of the old garrison of regulars that left long ago for the front.

To supplement the insufficient barrack accommodations for these citizen soldiers thousands upon thousands of low wooden shanties have been built, some by the soldiers themselves, some by skilled laborers. Out where the lines of barrack buildings end the group of huts commence, littering the rolling downs of Hampshire and looking for all the world like little mining camps. There is no canvas in sight, except for an occasional cook tent. The health of the men demanded huts, and so the huts were ordered. But there was no provision made for comfort. It is a part of the men's training to develop a fine scorn for luxuries. They sleep in blankets, with their clothes for pillows, on the pine floors of their shanties, and they don't enjoy the pleasures of steam heat or open fires. They are being prepared for the hardships ahead.

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In this immense military city the sergeants are doing their work. In one section they bend their energies to making infantry, in another they unfold to the volunteer rookies the mysteries of artillery fire; in yet another they spur their sweating horses up and down the ranks of a four-month-old cavalry troop and correct mistakes. All of the three main branches of the modern army are quartered at Aldershot, and in each are billeted the handful of old-timers that have made soldiers out of rookies in every quarter of the globe.

Watch them at their work. Here is a be-chevroned giant in charge of a body of men as large as the ordinary "company" commanded by a captain in the United States Army. He has a short "swagger stick" tucked under his left arm and every line of his body, every step he takes bespeaks the professional fighting man. There is a subaltern officer somewhere around, fastidiously attired in a Bond street tailored uniform of khaki serge. The subaltern is in official command, but he makes no attempt to obtrude his official prerogative on the perspiring sergeant.

The subaltern, in fact, is a little embarrassed. He is not exactly sure of what he ought to do, or how he ought to stand or just the right thing to say. He has forgotten that his sword is not a malacca walking stick and is leaning on it foolishly with the air of a very refined young man who has been entrapped into watching a vulgar circus parade, and is afraid of being caught at it. Fortunately for Kitchener's army this particular young officer was not representative of his rank. He had been very recently imported from Piccadilly. Although he was not specifically told so when his captain sent him in command of the sergeant's detachment, as a matter of fact he was put there to watch and grow wise.

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He wears a slightly pained frown as he eyes the oldtimer, erect, alert, assertive, maneuvering the double rank of soldiers. The frown indicates that he is learning. The sergeant bawls out an incomprehensible command. The detachment of soldiers seems to understand. They do a series of illusive contortions and emerge unruffled in perfect dress, and covering down the files. A smile of triumph twitches the old drillmaster's heavy mustache. The frown on the young officer's countenance gives place to a blank expression. Then the radiance of a happy thought flits across his beardless face and he approaches the sergeant briskly.

There is an exchange of salutes, during which the subaltern makes a slight miscalculation and knocks his cap awry. "Oh, I say, sergeant, would you mind explaining that last command to me," says the little tailor-made officer, loudly enough for all his men and the grinning spectators to hear. The sergeant explains in tones so low that only the twitchings of his mustache show that he is speaking at all. Meanwhile the men who have just performed the evolution under discussion march away, and are about to scale the fence that blocks their path when the sergeant, without taking his eyes off the face of his young commander, bawls out another order and back they come.

The sergeant continues with his explanation, halts his command without glancing up, completes his explanation, salutes and turns to the business of tactics again. Neither the privates nor the eager, self-conscious little officer have lost a moment of his attention. He has contrived to feed the brain of the officer and work the legs of the enlisted men at one and the same time without disarranging a single hair in his swelling mustache.

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Nothing is to much for these veteran sergeants, nothing can stagger them. When the drill regulations do not specify the exact mode of procedure for overcoming a given difficulty, their originality, acquired through coping with a thousand unforeseen situations, comes to the fore and carries them triumphantly through to a successful issue. For instance, there was a particular sergeant at Aldershot in charge of a particular group of men who found himself face to face with a stone wall when it came to teaching his men the correct marching cadence of a hundred and twenty steps to the minute.

The recruits did their best and the sergeant did his best; but the mystery of instinctive cadence remained a mystery through weeks of laborious instruction on the part of the veteran and despairing attentiveness on the part of the men. With villainous persistence the cadence of that group of men, when engaged in maneuvers, ran either too fast or too slow. It never stayed just right.

The sergeant labored and corrected and swore; the men marched and failed and perspired, all without avail. Then the sergeant cast about him for a drastic remedy. His throat was raw from counting time and he was very tired of the same thankless grind, week in and week out. He set his originality to work and developed an idea which led him one bright February day into Aldershot town, where he visited a music dealer's shop. Presently he emerged with the light of new hope in his eyes and proceeded back to camp.

Behold him next morning with his cadenceless detachment on the level drill ground that flanks the main highway just north of Aldershot. He had brought with him one diminutive drummer boy with drum and drumsticks complete, one senile chair with the back knocked off and one mysterious object shaped like an elongated pyramid, which he had placed on the chair. Over this object he was bending, apparently effecting a delicate adjustment.

The adjustment carefully completed, to attention; the sergeant bawled a contingent of the Royal Field Artillery past a band.

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Everywhere in the great camp is the ubiquitous veteran sergeant. Here he is whipping an awkward squad into shape; there he is gloating over a perfect company of soldiers that owe their training to him; somewhere else he is showing a raw man how to take a rifle to pieces and reassemble it, on the tip of his tongue are the answers to a million questions.

He is the man who shows them how to sit a caisson when the battery crosses a ditch; he is the man who can tell a private more than any doctor about keeping marching blisters off his feet; he is the seasoned rifleman who takes the "Tommies" to the range when they don't know the butt of a gun from the muzzle and brings them back wise in all the tricks of marksmanship that he himself learned from the wily Boer with the Mauser.

His is not the knowledge of the book-taught soldier. Half of what he teaches he risked his life to get. And exactly in proportion to the risks he took to learn is the value of the things he has come back to teach. He knows the difference between mechanical perfection that is only superficial and fighting efficiency that is absolutely fundamental. And he can produce both the one and the other as he chooses. In the case of Kitchener's army he has produced fighting efficiency.

It took him six months to do it. Military experts used to hold forth on the difficulties of accomplishing it in three years. He has set their theories at naught. Three million fighting men stand witness to the consummation of his labors. Barring spirit and equipment, he has given to them every other prime qualification of the great military machine. Spirit they had when they came to him and equipment the government has given them. The rest the sergeant furnished. To him they owe discipline, endurance and the technique of the soldier.

command to his men; simultaneously the crisp, sharp clicks of a metronome proceeded from the object of mystery and the drummer boy, lending an attentive ear, smote his drum to conform with the clicks. The sergeant bawled another command and his detachment moved briskly away at 120 steps to the minute, inspired by the beating of the drum.

The sergeant had won. He will eventually be able to remove both metronome and drummer boy and still watch his men march in approved regulation style at 120 steps to the minute just the same.

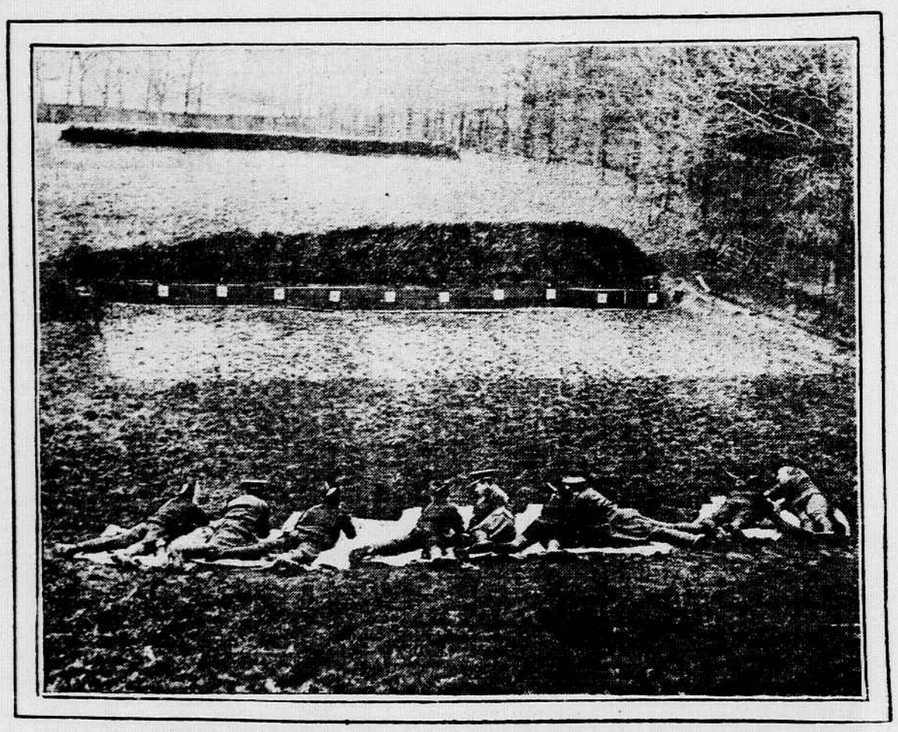
Royal Field Artillery ammunition mules are very particular beasts. Their green, high-strung beasts, recently imported from Egypt. They have a particular aversion to music and are adepts at converting a sedate ammunition train into wild chaos whenever a company of men headed by a band passes within earshot.

For this evil the sergeants of the R. F. A. were expected to find a remedy. They held a parley in the mess hall and found it in short order. As a result every morning thereafter the famous band of the R. F. A.—a band which sometimes sells its talent at the rate of a dollar a seat at the Queen's Hall Theater in London—assembled behind the stables of the regiment at 11:30 o'clock and marched around and around in the mud, while the mules listened in their stalls and grew wise. Again the originality of the sergeant came to the front. It is no longer considered a risk of life to take an ammunition train of Kitchener's Royal Field Artillery past a band.

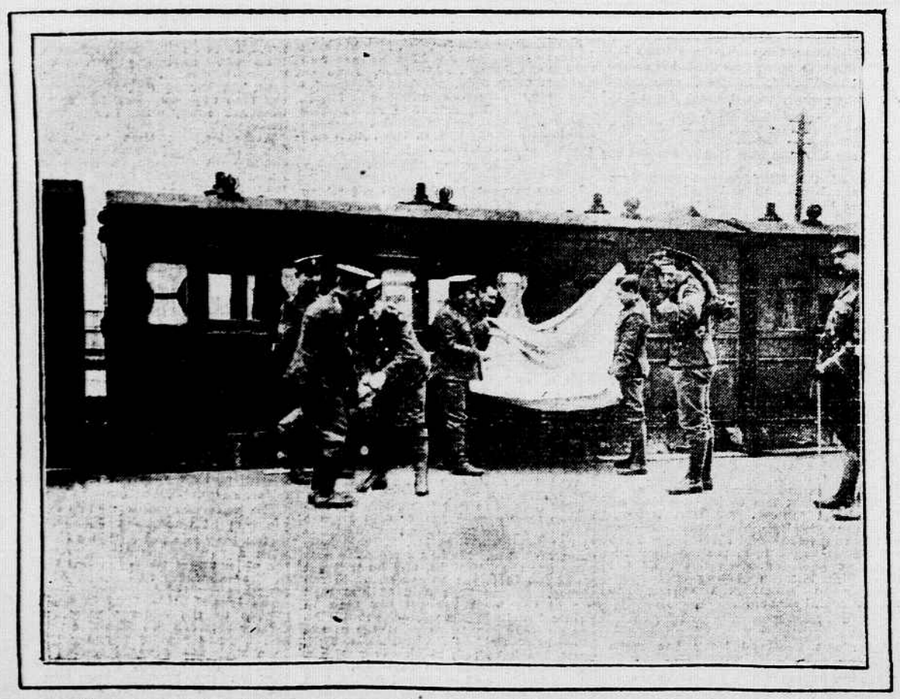
SERGEANTS OF KITCHENER'S ARMY "SPOTTING" ON THE RIFLE RANGE.

RECRUITS IN THE CAMP OF THE "LONDON SCOTTISH" REGIMENT.

PRACTICING THE USE OF THE BAYONET IN THE CAMP AT ALDERSHOT.



SERGEANTS TEACHING THEIR MEN THE FINE POINTS OF MARKSMANSHIP.



THE SERGEANT TEACHES THE RECRUIT HOW TO FOLD HIS BLANKET IN APPROVED MANNER.

TWENTIETH CENTURY MAY BE KNOWN AS THE WAR AGE

THIS generation may be known in history as the war age, and the twentieth century starts well, or ill, toward writing for itself the name of war century. But the century is still young and there is hope that a bad beginning may make a good ending.

The century opened with wars that were bloody and costly as wars went before the present war set a standard in blood loss and treasure loss that hitherto had been believed unthinkable. The last year of the nineteenth century saw the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer war and the Philippine insurrection, which followed close upon the brief but sharp and spirited clash between the United States and Spain. When the twentieth century dawned these two wars were pursuing their red course.

The Boer conflict lasted for three years, coming to a close in 1902, and the cost of that war in lives, counting the British and the Boer losses, was roughly 100,000. The cost in money to the British empire was, in round number, $1,000,000,000. The Philippine insurrection also lasted for three years, and what was called its conclusion came in 1902, the same year in which the Anglo-Boer war was concluded. It has been estimated that the Spanish-American war and the Philippine war, which were closely related, cost the world 100,000 lives and the cost in money to the United States has been appraised at about $450,000,000.

The guns in these wars had scarcely grown cold and the grass was still young on the graves of the men who fell in them when the Russo-Japanese war came on. It was a short war, but an epoch-making one, covering parts of the years 1904 and 1905, and was momentous in the matter of the things done, the lives sacrificed and the money spent. The military operations were on the most extensive scale which the world had up to that time known. It may be that accurate statistics have not been compiled as to the mortal and fiscal losses in that conflict, but an authoritative writer has said that the expenditure of money amounted to $2,250,000,000 and that over 300,000 lives were lost.

War broke out between Italy and Turkey in 1911 and lasted well into 1912, and although it did not create much of a stir in the United States, it would have measured up as considerable of a war had its cost and losses not been so overshadowed by the immensities of the Russo-Japanese war.

Peace had scarcely been restored when the series of Balkan wars came on and the war between Greece and the Balkan allies on one side and the Turks on the other, and then the terrible sequel of that war, the conflict between the former allies made the years 1912 and 1913 red ones in the world's history. These wars were among the bloodiest of the world and it may be that in their course were sown the dragon teeth which the world is reaping today. When the present war will end and whether the terms on which it shall be ended will lay the foundation for succeeding wars are questions that rest on the knees of the gods. Statisticians may compile figures that will pretend to tell the cost of the war in dollars and cents, but the loss of the world in trade, industrial relationships, ruined industries and derangement of international relations will never be expressed in figures.

No Unusual Rainfall Follows European Battles

THE fiction of cannon-made rain finds little space in the chronicles of the time. For a century, and it may be for even a longer period than that, there has been intermittent discussion of the influence of artillery and musketry fire on the clouds. Every coincidence of battle and rain has been recorded and commented on and the number of such coincidences has been rather impressive. Battles have been accompanied or closely followed by rainfall in so many instances that support was found for the theory that the clouds were responsive to the concussion of the guns.

It was many times pointed out that the amount of rain and the number of rainstorms were no greater in periods of war than in periods of peace, and that in the natural order of events if rain did not fall on the day of the battle it would fall within a few days thereafter because heretofore battles have mostly been fought during the summer months and in latitudes where rain might be expected every few days. But the reasoning has not been convincing to a host of people who, with the tables before them, could see that rainstorms followed battles and that therefore there must be a connection between them. It is no doubt true that in the hot months a rainstorm will follow soon after a railroad wreck or a murder or a fire, but the rain would have fallen anyhow.

There has been more gunpowder thunder in Europe during the last seven months than in the previous century. The cannon have been larger than ever before used in battle, either on land or sea. They have been closer together than they have ever before been placed on the battle lines. There have been so many more guns in action in this war than in other wars that the battles of other wars seem skirmishes in comparison. Millions of men have been firing powder where only thousands have been so engaged in other battles. The powder fired is many times more powerful than the smoking charcoal powder of other days. Yet, in spite of all this, there have been no reports that rains have followed battles. There have been some winter baths in France and Belgium, but perhaps the precipitation has not been greater there than in England, where outside of target practice and an occasional raid there has been no gun firing.

Some busy men have computed that during August, September and October, despite the heavy firing in Belgium and northern France, the rainfall was below the seasonal average.

GROWTH OF WALKING HABIT

WALKING has taken a hold on popular fancy as a sport, pastime, recreation and form of exercise. Walking has been urged upon the people by men and women interested in public health, by physical culture enthusiasts, by nature students and by the press. Every person converted to walking has become a missionary, and usually with all the spirit of a convert. The walking habit, which is being contracted by an increasing number of persons yearly, is a relatively new habit.

In those days usually referred to glowingly and somewhat indefinitely as the "good old times," walking was not practiced as a pleasure, but only as a necessity, and as a necessity it was avoided wherever possible. The average person did not move around much unless with the aid of a horse or a horse and trap. There was not much going to and fro on foot. Walking was apt to be considered as a sign of poverty or as evidence of dementia. On the other side of this question it may be said that in the olden time more men got their exercise in the open by their daily work than now.

Cities were small, and men were generally not called on to walk long distances. The bus or the omnibus came into operation on the city thoroughfare, then the horse car, the cable and the electric car. The cab or the omnibus came into operation—now the automobile is here. The ratio of indoor to outdoor workers increased and the means and opportunities for moving from place to place without much physical exertion multiplied.

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The fresh air propaganda directed the thoughts of most persons, and the feet of many toward the great outdoors and the advantages of walking and the dangers of sitting indoors and never walking were emphasized. Some persons, then others, and then more and more persons took to walking with much mental and physical pleasure to themselves. They spread the news, and walking, though not yet a general or a national pastime, has become a widespread form of exercise.

Quite a number of years ago walking became a professional sport and middle-aged men remember the six-day walking matches which principally were held in New York city, though also held in a number of other cities. In the beginning the contests attracted wide interest, but public opinion underwent a change or the sport underwent a change and men came to say that the matches were tiresome, degrading and revolting spectacles. The six-day walking match went the way of the six-day bicycle contest. Perhaps only a few persons will recall such names as Rowell, George Littlewood, Dan O'Leary, W. Gale and Joe Scott, six-day walk contestants who were very much in the public eye. Present-day readers have become familiar with the name of E. P. Weston, who when he was sixty-eight years old, walked from Portland, Me., to Chicago, in 1907, a distance of 1,226 miles, in twenty-nine days, covering the route in one day less than he did in 1867, when he was twenty-eight years old.

Weston has gained a great deal of publicity by reason of his transcontinental walks. There are many walking records. In 1904, 1907, 1908 and 1911, G. E. Larner, an Englishman, made these records—two miles in thirteen minutes, eleven and two-fifths seconds; three miles in twenty minutes and a fraction; four miles in twenty-seven minutes and a fraction; five miles in thirty-six minutes and a fraction; six miles in forty-three minutes and a fraction; seven miles in a trifle less than fifty-one minutes; eight miles in fifty-eight minutes and a fraction; nine miles in one hour, seven minutes and thirty-seven seconds and ten miles in a few seconds under one hour and sixteen minutes.

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The record for one-mile walk seems to have been made by G. H. Goulding, a Canadian, on June 4, 1910, in six minutes, twenty-five and four-fifth seconds. H. V. L. Ross, an Englishman, walked fifteen miles in one hour and fifty-nine minutes, and T. Griffith, also an Englishman, walked twenty miles in two hours and forty-seven minutes. C. A. Schofield of England, on May 20, 1911, walked twenty-five miles in three hours and thirty-seven minutes. A few other walking records are 100 miles, 18,33.40, by Dan O'Leary, at Chicago, in 1875; 200 miles in 40.46.30 and 531 miles in 144 hours, by George Littlewood in a six-day race, England, in 1882. In six days, twelve hours per day, Joe Scott of England, 1888, walked 353 miles.

The New Silhouette.

MRS. HARRY PAYNE WHITNEY, at a tea in her studio in McDougall's alley, praised the new spring fashions.

"They give a quite new silhouette," she said, "a slim, narrow-shouldered, very girlish silhouette."

Mrs. Whitney laughed and added:

"A painter asked me the other day how we women could prove that we were more capable than men.

"'Why, we can prove it by our clothes,' I answered. 'A man has clothes made to fit his figure, but a woman has her figure made to fit her clothes.'"